WE CLAIM:

1. An absorbable polymeric matrix for use in medical devices that provides a visual cue when heated so that the absorbable polymeric matrix may be deformed without significantly reducing the strength of a device made from the absorbable polymeric matrix.

2. The absorbable polymeric matrix of claim 1 wherein the absorbable polymeric matrix is made from biocompatible aliphatic polyesters.

3. The absorbable polymeric matrix of claim 1 wherein the absorbable polymeric matrix comprises a continuous phase and a dispersed phase.

4. The absorbable polymeric matrix of claim 3 wherein the continuous phase is an amorphous aliphatic polyester selected from the group consisting of amorphous polylactide, amorphous polyglycolide, amorphous poly-1,4-dioxan-2-one, amorphous polytrimethylene carbonate and miscible blends thereof.

5. The absorbable polymeric matrix of claim 3 wherein the dispersed phase is an aliphatic polyester selected from the group consisting of poly(ε-caprolactone); copolymers of ε-caprolactone and with up to 40 mole percent of a

second monomer selected from the group consisting of lactide, lactic acid, glycolide, glycolic acid, 1,4-dioxan-2-one, and trimethylene carbonate; copolymers of ε-caprolactone or trimethylene carbonate with greater than 60 mole percent 1,4-dioxan-2-one but less than 90 mole percent and blends thereof.

6. The absorbable polymeric matrix of claim 3 wherein the dispersed phase comprises from about 1 to about 50 weight percent of the absorbable polymeric matrix.

7. The absorbable polymeric matrix of claim 6 wherein the dispersed phase comprises from about 2 to about 20 weight percent of the absorbable polymeric matrix.

8. A medical device that at least a portion thereof is formed from an absorbable polymeric matrix that provides a visual cue when heated that the absorbable polymeric matrix may be deformed without significantly reducing the strength of the portions of the medical device made from the absorbable polymeric matrix wherein the visual cue disappears when the absorbable polymeric matrix cools to a temperature at which deformation would reduce the strength of the absorbable polymeric matrix.

9. The medical device of claim 8 wherein the medical device is selected from the group consisting of burn dressings, hernia patches, medicated dressings, facial substitutes, gauze, fabric, sheet, felt, sponge for liver hemostasis, gauze bandages, arterial graft or substitutes, bandages for skin surfaces, burn dressings, bone substitutes, needles, intrauterine devices, tubes, surgical instruments, vascular implants, vascular supports, vertebral discs, extracorporeal tubing, artificial skin, stents, suture anchors, injectable defect fillers, preformed defect fillers, bone waxes, cartilage replacements, hemostatic barriers, tissue scaffolds, monofilament sutures and braided sutures, pins, rods and plates.

10. The medical device of claim 8 wherein the medical device is selected from the group consisting, bone substitutes, vertebral discs, pins, rods and plates.

11. The medical device of claim 8 wherein the absorbable polymeric matrix comprises a continuous phase and a dispersed phase.

12. The medical device of claim 11 wherein the continuous phase is an amorphous aliphatic polyester selected from the group consisting of amorphous polylactide, amorphous polyglycolide,

amorphous poly-1,4-dioxan-2-one, amorphous polytrimethylene carbonate and miscible blends thereof.

13. The medical device of claim 12 wherein the dispersed phase is an aliphatic polyester selected from the group consisting of poly(ε-caprolactone); copolymers of ε-caprolactone and with up to 40 mole percent of a second monomer selected from the group consisting of lactide, lactic acid, glycolide, glycolic acid, 1,4-dioxan-2-one, and trimethylene carbonate; copolymers of ε-caprolactone or trimethylene carbonate with greater than 60 mole percent 1,4-dioxan-2-one but less than 90 mole percent and blends thereof.

14. A method of shaping a surgical article having a portion thereof formed from an absorbable polymeric matrix comprises heating that portion of the surgical article that is formed from the absorbable polymeric matrix until a visual cue is provided by the absorbable polymeric matrix that the portion of the surgical article made from the absorbable polymeric matrix may be safely shaped, then shaping that portion of the surgical article to the desired final shape while the visual cue is present and allowing the surgical article to cool.

15. The process of claim 14 wherein the surgical article is heated to a temperature in the range of from about 40°C to about 65°C.

16. The process of claim 14 wherein the surgical article is heated in a biocompatible liquid medium.

17. The process of claim 14 wherein the surgical article is selected from the group consisting, bone substitutes, vertebral discs, pins, rods and plates.

18. The process of claim 14 wherein the absorbable polymeric matrix has a continuous phase that is an amorphous aliphatic polyester selected from the group consisting of amorphous polylactide, amorphous polyglycolide, amorphous poly-1,4-dioxan-2-one, amorphous polytrimethylene carbonate and miscible blends thereof.

19. The process of claim 18 wherein the absorbable polymeric matrix has a dispersed phase that is an aliphatic polyester selected from the group consisting of poly(ε-caprolactone); copolymers of ε-caprolactone and with up to 40 mole percent of a second monomer selected from the group consisting of lactide,

lactic acid, glycolide, glycolic acid, 1,4-dioxan-2-one, and trimethylene carbonate; copolymers of ε-caprolactone or trimethylene carbonate with greater than 60 mole percent 1,4-dioxan-2-one but less than 90 mole percent and blends thereof.

20. The process of claim 19 wherein the dispersed phase comprises from about 2 to about 20 weight percent of the absorbable polymeric matrix.